



Things Parents Need to Know About Gifted and Talented Education in Maryland

1.

"Gifted and talented" is defined in Maryland law.

A gifted and talented student is identified as "having outstanding talent and performing, or showing the potential for performing at remarkably high levels of accomplishment when compared with other students" (Maryland Annotated Code §8-201).

2.

There are different types of gifts and talents.

Some gifted students have a general intellectual ability to think and analyze. Others may have a specific academic ability in mathematics or science. Still others are creative thinkers who produce unique ideas and products or are highly skilled in the visual and performing arts. There are potentially gifted leaders who exhibit early in life the abilities to influence and organize others.

3.

Gifted and talented students think and learn differently.

These students learn rapidly in areas of interest, have excellent memories, and make unique connections among facts and ideas. They are curious and ask the "big," hard-to-answer questions. They can concentrate for long periods to explore an area of interest. They like to solve problems and may be sensitive beyond their years to moral and ethical issues.

4.

Gifts and talents are identified using multiple methods.

Ability and achievement test scores are typically used, but teacher and parent observations of students' learning behaviors are also important. MSDE has developed the Primary Talent Development Early Learning Program in which teachers systematically observe and document gifted learning behaviors in all preK- 2 students. Examples of student work, such as a science experiment, model, painting, or poem may provide evidence of advanced capabilities.

5.

Programs and services are available.

Maryland public schools offer a variety of acceleration and enrichment opportunities that include early entrance to kindergarten, advanced reading or math groups, gifted and talented curriculum units, pull-out enrichment classes, single-subject or whole-grade acceleration, special magnet programs, Advanced Placement (AP) courses, original research, mentorships, or dual enrollment in college. Check with your local school system to see which are offered in your area.

6.

Some gifted students also have learning difficulties.

Some students are “twice exceptional,” which means they are very advanced in one area, such as mathematics, but struggle with organization, writing, or reading. These students may need special education and gifted education services. For more information, contact the Council for Exceptional Children, www.cectag.org.

7.

Extracurricular activities are important.

The Maryland Summer Centers (MSC) for Gifted and Talented Students offer engaging and challenging academic programs across the state. Learn more at www.marylandpublicschools.org/summercenters. Students learn teamwork and creative problem solving in Destination ImagiNation (DI) teams, typically sponsored by parents after school and on Saturdays. Find out more at www.imaginthis.org. The By Kids for Kids Invention Challenge provides students with opportunities to take their ideas from paper to production at www.bkfk.com.

8.

Special training in gifted education is available.

MSDE and the Maryland Educators for Gifted Students (MEGS) sponsor the annual Maryland State Conference on Gifted and Talented Education in October. For more information and to register, go to www.megsonline.net. Local colleges and universities offer graduate courses, and MSDE now offers several online courses for teachers.

9.

Parent support is vital.

Educate yourself and help to educate others about the special needs of gifted and talented students. Become active in your local school’s PTA. Some school systems also have gifted and talented parent groups. The Maryland Coalition for Gifted and Talented Education (MCGATE) holds an annual conference for parents and educators and can help you start a local advocacy group. Go to www.mcgate.org.

10.

You can get more information.

Your child’s school principal can answer questions about local programs and procedures. Each school system has a central office staff person who coordinates gifted and talented education. Call the Maryland State Department of Education at 410-767-0363, or go to www.marylandpublicschools.org. The National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) website is an excellent resource, www.nagc.org. The Hoagies’ Gifted Education Page has resources for parents and activities for students, www.hoagiesgifted.org.